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ABSTRACT

This study explored Spanish regular education teachers' perceptions of instructional adaptations in inclusive classrooms, noting the feasibility and effectiveness of implementation. The study focused on how teachers at different grade levels would respond to such adaptations. A group of 79 teachers from urban K-12 schools rated the feasibility and effectiveness of 29 items on the Teaching Adaptation Scale. Results indicated that teachers had a relatively moderate acceptance of instructional accommodations in their classrooms. They considered most of the adaptations somewhat feasible and effective, although they rated some as clearly less acceptable (providing ongoing feedback and adapting evaluations). The strategies they considered more effective were also viewed as having greater possibility for application. There were statistically significant differences between grade groupings, with kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and high school teachers providing different patterns of responses. (Contains 15 references.) (SM)

Instructional Adaptations in Inclusive Classrooms in Spain: Feasibility and Effectiveness of Implementation

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Abstract

This study explored regular education teachers' perceptions of instructional adaptations in inclusive classrooms and its feasibility and effectiveness of implementation. Of particular interest was to know how teachers of different grade levels would respond to such adaptations. Kindergarten (n = 13), elementary (n = 30), secondary (n = 24), and high school (n = 12) teachers rated the feasibility and effectiveness of 29 items on the Escala de Adaptaciones de la Enseñanza (ESAE-Form G) on a Likert-type scale. Results indicated a moderate teacher acceptance of instructional accommodations in their classrooms. Additionally, statistically significant differences between grade grouping (high school vs compulsary grades) surfaced. Findings are discussed in light of needs of professional practice changes and sustantive reform and/or improvement on teachers' curriculum preparation programs.

Keywords: Instructional adaptations, kindergarten, elementary, secondary and high school regular education teachers' perceptions, Spain.

Instructional Adaptations in Inclusive Classrooms in Spain: Feasibility and Effectiveness of Implementation

One of the most controversial and debatable subjects regarding education during the last two decades has been the mainstreaming/inclusion of students with special educational needs. It is taken for granted that the regular classroom is the ideal place for teaching all students because of its potential capacity to offer full learning experiences within a peer group. Nevertheless, experts warn that the success of inclusion depends basically on the predisposition of schools and teachers' willing to carry out the necessary instructional adjustments.

Very little is known about the kind and level of acceptance of teachers' instructional accommodations, an assertion which is particularly true for Spain, country where mainstreaming/inclusion has been imposed by law (LISMI, 1982; LOGSE, 1990) rather than after a process of consultation.

For research purposes, specialized literature differentiates between general and specific adaptations (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Phillips, & Karns, 1995). The former is that which the teacher carries out for a class-group as a whole, which does not call for a significant curriculum change or modification. On the other hand, a specific adaptation refers to individual adaptations of a planned curriculum in order to respond to particular and extreme educational needs. Research suggests (Scott, Vitale, & Masten, 1998; Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 1996) that teachers perceive instructional adaptations advisable and necessary but they find it rather difficult to implement them in the regular classroom. In fact, there are studies which show that teachers seldom put to practice actions which redound to substantial teaching modifications (Baker, & Zigmond, 1990), and that teaching the whole class-group is more the norm than the exception

(McIntosh, Vaughn, Schumm, Haager, & Lee, 1993; Schumm, Vaughn, Haager, McDowell, Rothlein, & Saumell, 1995). Furthermore, when teachers are aware of the need to adapt instruction, they try to carry out accommodations which, with reasonable dedication of time and effort, are useful to all students and can be easy to apply and integrate into the dynamic of the classroom (Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1998; Patton, 1997).

This state-of-the-art is similar in Spain (Cardona, Reig y Domene, 2000). In spite of the fact that several measures to facilitate inclusion have been ruled (*Decreto 39/1998 de ordenación de la educación para atender al alumnado con necesidades educativas especiales; Órdenes 6082/1999 y 8955/2001 que regulan la atención a la diversidad en la educación secundaria, infantil y primaria*), RE teachers show resistance to its implementation in the regular classrooms.

On being asked, RE teachers replied that they do no have the knowledge, skills or resources to plan as well as teach adequately students with greater educational needs than the majority (Cardona, 2000a; Minke, Bear, Deemer, & Griffin, 1996; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991; Wholery et al., 1995), an assertion which is borne out by the meta-analysis carried out by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996).

The existing lack of harmony between teacher's thinking and acting underlines the need to investigate and deepen on teachers' conviction regarding differentiated instruction. One of the critical factors which can help understand teacher reticence and/or resistance to adapt instruction is the cost of adaptation. According to the research synthesis carried out by Scott, Vitale, and Masten (1998) and by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), teachers usually preferred instructional adaptations which called for minimum preparation, which took up little time and benefited all the students. In other words,

they chose to carry out a general adaptation of instruction before a significant individual adaptation of the curriculum.

Things being as they are, we decided to assess teacher acceptance of general instructional adaptations in the Spanish context. In line with Kazdin (1980), acceptance depends on a global evaluation of the adaptive strategy in terms of feasibility to put it into practice, effectiveness and appropriateness of the adjustment to a particular situation. We thought that the degree of teachers' acceptance of general adaptations would be a key variable for understanding their compromise to teach diverse students in inclusive classrooms, and definitely to know to what extend they are ready to differentiate instruction. Moreover, studying how teachers approach adaptations may contribute not only to identify teacher preferences but also barriers and impediments to implement them.

Existing knowledge available in Spain (Cardona 2000a, 2001; Cardona, Reig, & Ribera, 2000) is still precarious. This is the reason why we have began to explore the field from the works of Bettencourt (1999); McLeskey y Waldron, 2002; Schumm, and Vaughn (1991); Schumm et al. (1994); Vaughn, Reiss, Rothlein, and Hughes (1999); Whinnery, Fuchs, and Fuchs (1991); Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Wotruba, and Nania (1990), and others. At present, we do not know whether Spanish teachers' perceptions of general adaptations are similar to those identified with teachers working in other educational contexts, or whether on the contrary, they differ. In addition, we believe that the problem of teaching differentiation is, if one might say so, a major one for secondary and high school education, whose teachers feel more under pressure than those involved in teaching at lower levels.

The aim, therefore, of this study on differentiation in Spain was to analyze the way in which teachers valued general

instructional adaptations in terms of feasibility and effectiveness of implementation, and whether or not their perceptions vary according to grade level taught.

Method

Participants

Participants were 79 regular education teachers (91% of the total population) of a small urban city in the province of Alicante, Spain. All public schools of the city, 4 public elementary and 1 combined middle-high school, participated in the study. The number of participant teachers per grade grouping was as follows: kindergarten (n = 13), elementary (n = 30), secondary (n = 24), and high school (n = 12). Their ages ranged from 24 to 64 years old (M = 36.95, SD = 9.65). Seventy one percent of the teachers were women and 29% were men. Thirty two percent held Master degrees while the other (68%) held Bachelors. Over half of the teachers (60%) had more than 3 years of teaching experience. Although, a few teachers had previous experience in special education, 100% of them said that they had students with (33% mild, 38% moderate and 14% severe) special educational needs in their classrooms.

The Teaching Adaptation Scale (TAS, General Version) (Cardona, 2000b) was used to assess teachers' judgments of feasibility and effectiveness of instructional adaptations. The TAS directs teachers to rate each of the 29 in terms of feasibility (how practical it would be to actually implement the adaptation) and effectiveness (if implemented how effective seem to be) using 5-point Liker-type scales. The unpublished instrument was created and piloted with a sample of teachers completing a Master degree in Educational Psychology at the University of Alicante. The Cronbach coefficient alpha was applied to measure internal consistency and yielded reliability coefficients of .92, and .89 for the feasibility and effectiveness dimensions, respectively.

After contacting with school principals, the questionnaires containing the Scale were distributed directly by the research-team, and completed by the regular education teachers before a meeting staff. The questionnaires were fulfilled by 98% of the teachers.

Results

Overall Rating of Adaptations

The mean and standard deviation of the feasibility and effectiveness ratings for all participant teachers are presented in Table 1. The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to compare the difference between the feasibility and effectiveness ratings for each 29 items. As Table 1 indicates, for many adaptations the difference between the means proved to be statistically significant at $p < .01$ level.

In order to determine the adaptations respondents deemed most feasible, items that were 1 SD (.59) above the total mean feasibility rating (3.81) for all items, or those items with a mean rating of 4.40 or higher, were identified. Thus, the most feasible adaptation were as follows: Items 1 (establish routines), 26 (adapt instruments for assessment), 27 (adapt grading criteria), and 28 (provide more time for instruction). In a similar manner, the most effective general adaptation were identified. Once again, those items 1 SD (.34) above the total mean effectiveness rating (3.80), or those items with a mean effectiveness rating of 4.14 or higher were considered. Thus, the adaptations rated as most effective were: items 8 (adapt long-range plans), 26 (adapt instruments for assessment), 27 (adapt grading criteria), 28 (provide more time for instruction), and 29 (allow retention). The least effective general adaptations were those with means 1 SD below the overall mean of 3.80 or lower. The adaptations rated as least effective corresponded to items 4 (establish personal

relationship), 6 (respect individuals with differences), 7 (communicate with special education teacher), 24 (provide ongoing feedback), and 25 (adapt assessment).

Ratings of Adaptations by Grade Grouping

The mean feasibility ratings for each inventory item by grade grouping (kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and high school) is presented in Table 2. The same information for the effectiveness ratings is contained in Table 3.

A Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance was conducted for each inventory item for each inventory category (feasibility and effectiveness) to compare grade grouping ratings of each of the 29 general instructional adaptations. Differences proved to be statistically significant for ten feasibility items:1, 3, 6, 11, 15, 17, 19, 22, 26, and 27 (see Table 2), and for ten effectiveness items: 1, 7, 11, 17, 18, 19, 26, 27, 28, and 29 (Table 3). Post hoc analyses were conducted using Mann-Whitney U-Wilcoxon Rank Sum W Tests.

Conclusions and Educational Importance of the Study

The results of this survey suggest that RE teachers' acceptance of instructional adaptations in Spain is *relatively moderate*. Most of the adaptations were considered somewhat feasible and effective (averages of 3.81 and 3.80, respectively), although some items were rated clearly less acceptable (provide ongoing feedback and adapt evaluations).

What stands out in this study is the relationship between feasibility and effectiveness of adaptations, since the strategies considered more effective are, at the same time seen as having greater possibility of application (e.g., adapt instruments for evaluation, adapt scoring/grading criteria, provide more time, or allow retention).

There were some differences between grade groupings with kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and high school teachers providing a different pattern of response. On the whole, as grade level increases, less feasible and effective teachers

perceive instructional adaptations, which can be indicative of the little realistic that can be inclusion in secondary and high school levels.

The study shows domains in which Spanish teachers need improve knowledge and skills to make their teaching more adaptive and flexible. Consequently, educational policy should: (a) ensure teachers' knowledge and skills in implementing a growing range of instructional strategies, (b) provide models for differentiated curriculum and instruction, and (c) provide opportunities to observe teachers who practice differentiation.

The importance of this study lies on the idea that, if instructional adaptations were implemented and assessed systematically, more specialized and individualized adaptations (e. g., curriculum adaptations) were not necessary most times.

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Appendix

Table 1
Teacher Ratings of Feasibility and Effectiveness of Instructional Adaptations

	Feasibility		Effectiveness	
Instructional Adaptations	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
1. Establish rules and routines.	4.42**	0.84	3.97	0.77
2. Adapt classroom management strategies.	4.04**	1.04	3.93	0.75
3. Provide reinforcement.	3.96**	0.95	3.71	1.08
4. Establish personal relationship.	3.16*	1.20	3.10	0.87
5. Help find ways to deal with feelings.	3.41	1.09	3.66	1.05
6. Respect individuals with differences.	3.17	1.09	3.38	0.96
7. Communicate with special education teacher.	2.76	4.48	3.59	1.19
8. Adapt long-range plans.	4.05	1.06	4.18*	0.82
9. Adapt daily plans.	3.89*	1.26	3.71	1.07
10. Plan assignments to allow success.	3.05	1.43	3.29*	1.09
11. Teach learning strategies.	4.15*	1.08	4.01	0.88
12. Adjust physical arrangements.	3.99	0.99	3.91	0.89
13. Use alternative materials.	4.14	1.06	4.13	1.01
14. Use computers.	3.97*	1.12	3.85	0.90
15. Monitor understanding of directions.	3.71**	1.06	3.55	1.08
16. Monitor understanding of concepts.	4.28**	0.70	3.93	0.87
17. Provide individualized instruction.	4.37**	0.76	3.93	1.00
18. Pair with classmate.	4.06**	0.99	3.57	1.13
19. Use small group activities.	4.23**	0.99	4.00	0.91
20. Involve student in whole class activities.	4.04*	1.03	4.08	0.82
21. Provide extra time.	4.09**	0.94	3.88	0.92
22. Adapt pacing of instruction.	3.60	1.32	3.82*	1.00
23. Keep records to monitor progress.	3.22	1.37	3.59	1.11
24. Provide ongoing feedback.	2.69	1.51	3.41	1.37
25. Adapt evaluations.	2.34	1.53	3.00	1.55
26. Adapt instruments for evaluation.	4.42**	0.61	4.17	0.68
27. Adapt scoring/grading criteria.	4.56**	0.66	4.42	0.68
28. Provide more time.	4.40*	0.73	4.31	1.09
29. Allow retention.	4.36**	0.70	4.17	0.80
Averages	**3.81**	**0.59**	**3.80**	**0.34**

Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test comparisons between means of feasibility and effectiveness ratings (** = significant at .01 level, * = significant at .05 level).

Table 2
Teacher Ratings of Feasibility of Instructional Adaptations by Grade Grouping

	Kindergarten	Elementary School	Secondary School	High School
Instructional Adaptations	**M**	**M**	**M**	**M**
1. Establish rules and routines.	4.77**	4.73	4.25	3.58
2. Adapt classroom management strategies.	4.08	4.04	4.21	3.67
3. Provide reinforcement.	4.15**	4.30	3.92	3.00
4. Establish personal relationship.	2.75	3.22	3.14	3.50
5. Help find ways to deal with feelings.	3.46	3.57	3.52	2.75
6. Respect individuals with differences.	3.62*	3.40	3.05	2.27
7. Communicate with special education teacher.	3.23	2.81	2.81	1.90
8. Adapt long-range plans.	4.62	3.93	4.05	3.73
9. Adapt daily plans.	3.31	4.04	4.13	3.75
10. Plan assignments to allow success.	2.92	2.86	3.37	3.00
11. Teach learning strategies.	4.38	4.33	4.41**	3.08
12. Adjust physical arrangements.	4.08	4.17	4.04	3.36
13. Use alternative materials.	4.33	4.44	4.00	3.45
14. Use computers.	5.00	4.07	3.90	3.67
15. Monitor understanding of directions.	5.00*	4.04	3.38	3.33
16. Monitor understanding of concepts.	5.00	4.34	4.14	4.25
17. Provide individualized instruction.	5.00*	4.61	4.22	4.00
18. Pair with classmate.	5.00	4.14	4.00	3.83
19. Use small group activities.	4.85*	4.47	3.88	3.67
20. Involve student in whole class activities.	4.23	4.00	3.92	4.17
21. Provide extra time.	3.92	4.30	4.09	3.83
22. Adapt pacing of instruction.	4.46*	3.68	3.35	3.00
23. Keep records to monitor progress.	3.17	3.55	3.05	3.00
24. Provide ongoing feedback.	2.67	2.68	2.71	2.67
25. Adapt evaluations.	2.42	2.00	2.67	2.25
26. Adapt instruments for evaluation.	4.77*	4.45	4.38	4.08
27. Adapt scoring/grading criteria.	4.38	4.83**	4.54	4.08
28. Provide more time.	4.54	4.59	4.25	4.08
29. Allow retention.	4.54	4.52	4.21	4.08
Averages	**4.09**	**3.93**	**3.64**	**3.41**

Mann-Whitney U comparisons between means of kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school teachers (* = significant at .05 level, ** = significant at .01 level).

Table 3
Teacher Ratings of Effectiveness of Instructional Adaptations by Grade Grouping

	Kindergarten	Elementary School	Secondary School	High School
Instructional Adaptations	**M**	**M**	**M**	**M**
1. Establish rules and routines.	3.85	4.23*	3.91	3.50
2. Adapt classroom management strategies.	3.77	3.96	4.05	3.78
3. Provide reinforcement.	3.69	4.03	3.65	2.90
4. Establish personal relationship.	3.00	3.47	2.79	3.20
5. Help find ways to deal with feelings.	3.46	3.92	3.74	3.10
6. Respect individuals with differences.	3.62	3.58	3.25	2.78
7. Communicate with special education teacher.	3.63	4.08*	3.69	2.00
8. Adapt long-range plans.	4.42	4.35	4.11	3.50
9. Adapt daily plans.	3.63	3.55	4.14	3.27
10. Plan assignments to allow success.	3.40	3.21	3.71	2.67
11. Teach learning strategies.	4.31**	4.17	4.19	3.00
12. Adjust physical arrangements.	3.82	4.19	3.86	3.50
13. Use alternative materials.	3.92	4.46	4.14	3.50
14. Use computers.	4.50	3.96	3.83	3.50
15. Monitor understanding of directions.	4.50	3.75	3.56	2.78
16. Monitor understanding of concepts.	4.50	4.00	3.85	3.80
17. Provide individualized instruction.	4.50**	4.41	3.67	3.18
18. Pair with classmate.	4.50*	3.84	3.60	2.73
19. Use small group activities.	4.62**	4.20	3.50	3.67
20. Involve student in whole class activities.	4.18	4.13	4.05	3.90
21. Provide extra time.	3.92	4.20	3.85	3.18
22. Adapt pacing of instruction.	4.31	3.91	3.38	3.67
23. Keep records to monitor progress.	3.83	3.78	3.64	3.00
24. Provide ongoing feedback.	4.00	3.56	3.44	2.25
25. Adapt evaluations.	4.50	2.88	3.09	2.40
26. Adapt instruments for evaluation.	4.23	4.45*	4.00	3.75
27. Adapt scoring/grading criteria.	4.09	4.77**	4.26	4.17
28. Provide more time.	4.00	4.66*	4.04	4.33
29. Allow retention.	4.27	4.44*	3.91	3.92
Averages	**4.05**	**4.00**	**3.79**	**3.27**

Mann-Whitney U comparisons between means of kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school teachers (* = significant at .05 level, ** = significant at .01 level).

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